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Halloween Food Safety Tips for Parents

Halloween is a fun holiday that often is celebrated by trick-or-treating, apple bobbing and costume parties. Follow these simple steps to help your children have a fun and safe Halloween.

- Children shouldn't snack while they're out trick-or-treating. Urge your children to wait until they get home and you have had a chance to inspect the contents of their "goody bags."
- To help prevent children from snacking, give them a light meal or snack before they head out – don't send them out on an empty stomach.
- Tell children not to accept – and especially not to eat – anything that isn't commercially wrapped.
- Parents of very young children should remove any choking hazards such as gum, peanuts, hard candies or small toys.
- Inspect commercially wrapped treats for signs of tampering, such as an unusual appearance or discoloration, tiny pinholes, or tears in wrappers. Throw away anything that looks suspicious.

And follow these tips for Halloween parties at home:

- If juice or cider is served to children at Halloween parties, make sure it is pasteurized or otherwise treated to destroy harmful bacteria. Juice or cider that has not been treated will say so on the label.
- No matter how tempting, don't taste raw cookie dough or cake batter.
- "Scare" bacteria away by keeping all perishable foods chilled until serving time. These include, for example, finger sandwiches, cheese platters, fruit or tossed salads, cold pasta dishes with meat, poultry, or seafood, and cream pies or cakes with whipped-cream and cream-cheese frostings. Cold temperatures help keep most harmful bacteria from multiplying. And don't leave the food at room temperature for more than two-hours.

For more information regarding Halloween food safety, contact the County of San Bernardino, Department of Public Health, Environmental Health Services, at 909-884-4056 or www.sbcounty.gov/dehs.

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